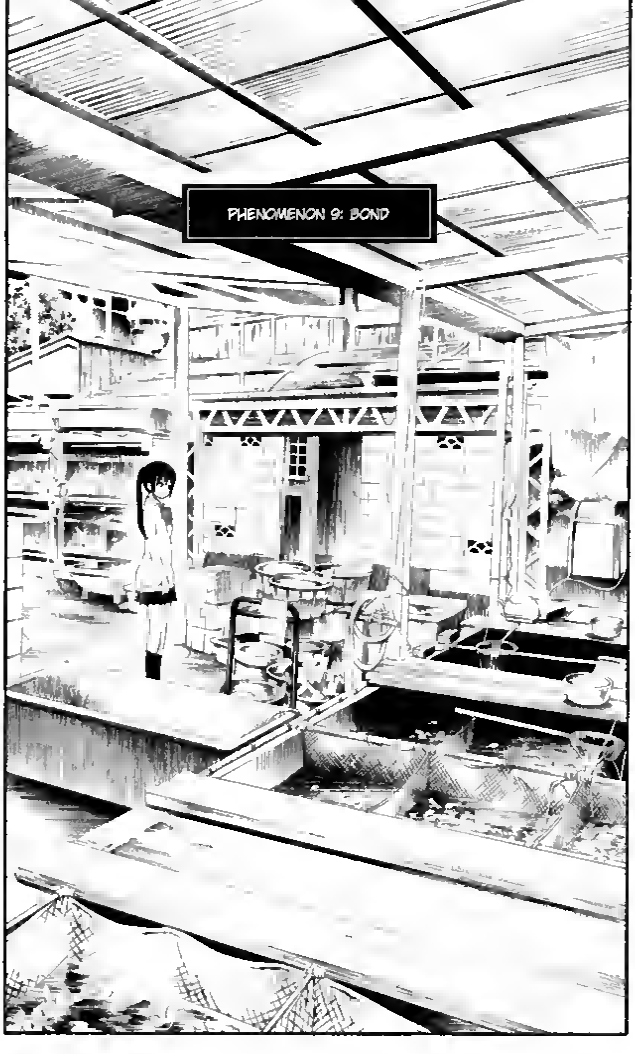

PHENOMENON 9: BOND

WHAT'S WRONG?
HURRY UP AND CONTINUE

LOOK, SOUMA! LOOK HOW LITTLE THIS CRANE IS!
UM... IS IT THIS ONE?
UM... UH...
AH!
WAIT YOU'RE OPENING IT?
GRANDMA MADE IT OF COURSE! LET ME SEE ---
IT'S MADE WITH A SCRAP OF CHIYOGAMI
THAT I AM!
OH, LOOKS LIKE IT'S ABOUT DINNER.
IS SOMETHING WRITTEN INSIDE...?
ORIGAMI NOTES...?
THAT'S WHY I TEND TO AUTOMATICALLY OPEN THEM WHEN I SEE THEM.
GRANDMA'S LEFT NOTES IN PAPER CRANES LIKE THIS SINCE WAY BACK THEN

I CAN ALWAYS OPEN THEM AND LOOK INSIDE.
THAT WAY, EVEN IF I FORGET WHAT I WROTE DOWN.
THAT'S WHY EVERY DAY I MAKE PAPER CRANES WITH NOTES I CAN'T FORGET.

I HAVE A CONTEST TO GO TO NOW. I'M BUSY.
AH, WELL, HOLD ON A SECOND...
SERIOUSLY... IF YOU DON'T NEED US, THEN WE WANT TO DO OUR OWN THING.
IF WE HAVE NO BUSINESS HERE, CAN WE LEAVE?
THE ART CLUB'S MEETING NOW TO DECIDE ON A SCHEDULE.
WHAT'S SHE DOING WITH THOSE ...?
HEEEY YOU'RE WASTING TIME ---!

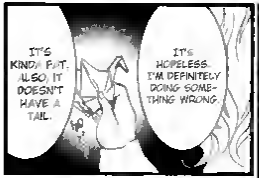
C'MON, HURRY UP AND GET ON WITH IT! UH, WHO'S THAT?
HANAONO-SAN FROM C-CLASS!
SHE JUST MOVED HERE SHE MIGHT NOT REALLY KNOW WHAT TO DO
WHO PUT SOMEONE LIKE HER ON THE COMMIT-TEE?
WHO CARES SHE SHOULD DO HER JOB
SHUT UP YOU GUYS!
SEMPAI'S TRYING HER HARDEST! THIS IS HER FIRST TIME ACTING AS A MESSENGER
GROW-UP SHUT UP AND PAY ATTENTION! IDIOTS!
HEY, WHAT —
PLEASE SIT DOWN!
IT SEEMS THE 3RD-YEARS ARE CLAIMING THEY'RE BUSY
BUT
EVERYONE, PLEASE BE QUIET!

I'M SORRY!
WE WILL MAKE UP FOR THE DELAY AND REPORT BACK BY NEXT TIME.
WE CAN'T CONFIRM OUR PROGRESS DUE TO A COMMUNICATION ERROR BETWEEN THE TEAM.

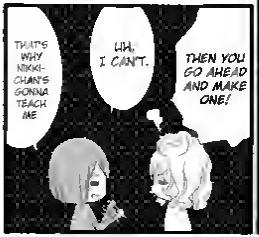
BUT MY REQUEST TODAY IS TO BE WITH AKAI-CHAN...
I'LL GO IN YOUR PLACE. YOU SHOULD GO HOME ALREADY.
...BUT...

NO IT'S NOTHING
YOU SHOULD GO HOME RIGHT AWAY TODAY AND RELAX A LITTLE
THANKS FOR BACK THERE SOUMA
I'M SORRY FOR MAKING YOU WORRY.

.....
WHAT'S WRONG, NISHIKI?


IT'S KINDA FUN. ALSO, IT DOESN'T HAVE A TAIL.
IT'S HOPELESS. I'M DEFINITELY DOING SOMETHING WRONG.

HMM.
NIKKI-CHAN'S LATE...
LOOKS LIKE SHE REMEMBERED SOMETHING IMPORTANT AGAIN


THAT'S WHY NIKKI-CHAN'S GONNA TEACH ME
UHH, I CAN'T.
THEN YOU GO AHEAD AND MAKE ONE!

THE HELL? ISN'T IT MORE LIKE HALF A SANDWICH?
ALL DONE IT'S A SAND-WICH!
HUH?

MAKE A PANDA
C'MON MAKE SOMETHING
OKAY...

HUH? HANAONO-SAN...? SHE ALREADY LEFT THOUGH
AFTER THE COMMITTEE MEETING, SHE WENT TO VISIT SOMEONE...

YOU TWO ARE STILL HERE?
OH, IT'S KANOU.
YUP. WE'RE WAITING FOR NIKKI-CHAN.

COMING
AH!

OH, IT'S SOUMA-SAN?
HELLO

I SEE YOU'RE HERE IN NISHIKI-SAN'S PLACE.
WELL... I'M THE SECOND MEMBER OF SUKUIYA
WELL THEN, SECOND MEMBER!
THERE'S DEFINITELY SOMETHING SUSPICIOUS
I SMELL TROUBLE!
ABOUT THAT BLANK PAPER CRANE.
OH ?
SURELY SOMEONE SECRETLY REPLACED THE PAPER CRANE OUT OF SPITE.
IT'S POSSIBLE AS LONG AS SOMEONE BOUGHT SIMILAR-LOOKING CHIYOGAMI.
I'M POSITIVE SHE WROTE A NOTE AT THE CAT CAFE THE OTHER DAY CONCERNING THE COMMITTEE MEETING
IT'S ODD THAT IT'S COMPLETELY BLANK!
SOMETIMES NISHIKI MAKES A MISTAKE.
SOMETIMES SHE FORGETS TO WRITE DOWN WHAT SHE WANTS TO REMEMBER IS ALL...

NISHIKI USED TO LIVE WITH HER FAMILY AROUND HERE BEFORE SHE ENTERED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.
SHE MOVED BECAUSE OF HER PARENTS.
THAT'S ALL I KNOW.
I SEE. BUT IT'D HAVE TO BE SOMEONE WHO KNOWS THAT NISHIKI WRITES NOTES.
OR SOMEONE WHO FOUND THAT OUT RECENTLY.
SOUMA-SAN, SUKUIYA-SAN DOESN'T LIVE WITH HER PARENTS, RIGHT?
YEAH. DID NISHIKI TELL YOU THAT?
NO. I JUST HAPPENED TO HEAR ABOUT IT.
YOU DIDN'T SEE HER AGAIN UNTIL HIGH SCHOOL?
NO.
WE SAW EACH OTHER A COUPLE OF TIMES.

I SAW A PHOTOGRAPH OF YOU TWO WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG ON GOLDFISH HILL
YOU TWO USED TO ALWAYS PLAY TOGETHER, HUH?
—
SOUMA-SAN
YEAH — OH WAIT
THERE WAS SOMEONE ELSE
I'M HOME
SOMEONE ELSE?
OH, IT'S MY BROTHER.
I'M SORRY I'M LATE AKAI
HUH? WHOSE SHOES ARE THESE ?
SOUMA-SAN CAME TO KEEP ME COMPANY TODAY
OH THE SECOND MEM. ER NEVER MIND

... WAIT! BIG BRO, COULD YOU BE
THE "SOMEONE ELSE" HE MENTIONED?
HMM, WHAT RE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
OH, SOUMA-KUN I'M SORRY ABOUT TODAY THANKS FOR YOUR HELP
IT WAS NOTHING WELL, I'M OFF
OH LEAVING ALREADY? I BOUGHT SOME DELICIOUS STRAW BERRIES DO YOU WANT TO JOIN ME?
I HAVE TO GO
I SEE WELL I'LL HAVE THEM AFTER DINNER AKAI COULD YOU PUT THESE IN THE REFRIGERATOR FOR ME?
OKAY
KON-SAN

WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING TO DO WITH NISHIKI?
I'M LEAVING
I MAY OR MAY NOT REMEMBER. WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
YOU KNOW ABOUT THE NIGHT OF THE SUMMER FESTIVAL, DON'T YOU? I THOUGHT YOU DID, SO I...
WAS GOING TO TELL YOU ABOUT HER...

I
REMEMBER.
SEE
YOU LATER
TAKE CARE

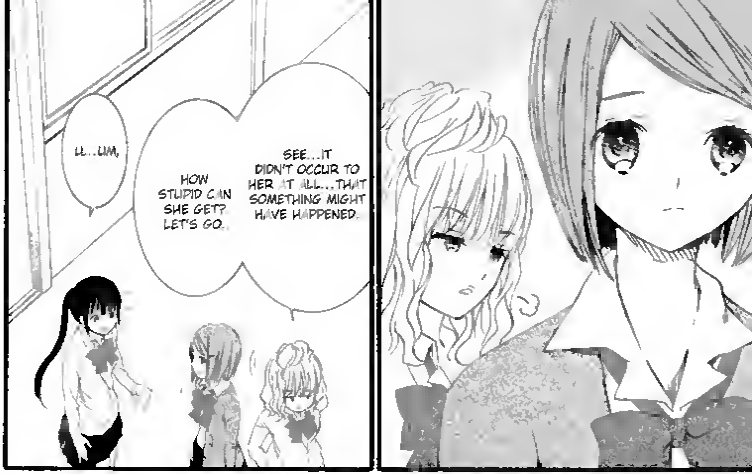
I'M SORRY I LOST MY NOTE
DIDN'T I TELL YOU WHAT COLORS WE NEEDED BEFORE?
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU YOU HAVEN'T PLACED AN ORDER YET THEN?

NIKKI-CHAN
OKAY I'M SORRY
ANYWAY, SORRY TO SAY, BUT...YOU CAN'T HELP THE ART CLUB ANYMORE.

WHAT? AGAIN...?

ER, WHAT HAPPENED?
YESTERDAY ?

HEY WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU YESTERDAY?
DO YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING?


UM...UM,
HOW STUPID CAN SHE GET? LET'S GO.
SEE...IT DIDN'T OCCUR TO HER AT ALL...THAT SOMETHING MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED.

MIS...: FORGET IT. LET'S GO, PANDA.
NISHIKI: ER...

SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN STARING INTO SPACE BY HERSELF
THAT'S WHY SOMETHING ABOUT HER STOOD OUT.
BUT IN THE END,

I'M SORRY! IS THIS ABOUT THE COMMITTEE MEETING, OR...?
YOU PROMISED
YOU'D TEACH US HOW TO MAKE AN ORIGAMI LOTUS FLOWER YESTERDAY...

I KNEW I SHOULD'VE
LEFT HER ALONE
ALONE
ALL ALONE.
ALONE.
ALONE.

!
UM...
UH...
.....
AH!
WHAT THE...SHE RAN AWAY.
.....

IT'S...IT'S NOTHING
...WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S WRONG, MISS?

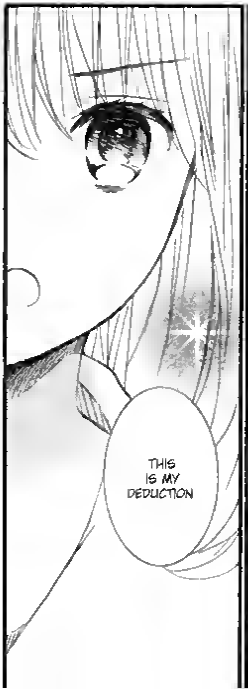
YOU LIKED TO SCOOP GOLDFISH RIGHT? THE MISSUS TOLD ME ABOUT WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG

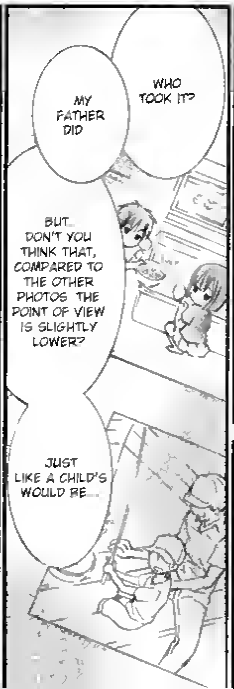
HAHA I WOULD GET SO UPSET
YOU WEREN'T VERY GOOD AT GOLD-FISH SCOOPING, WERE YOU?
MY FATHER LIKED TAKING PHOTOS. HE TOOK ONES OF CHILDREN WHO OCCASIONALLY CAME HERE TO PLAY, AS YOU CAN SEE
LOOK AT THAT PHOTO
DON'T HELP ME ANYMORE!
I'M FINE! I CAN RIDE IT BY MYSELF!
YOU CAN'T DO IT ON YOUR OWN. I'LL SIT BEHIND YOU
AND SO THE LAD GAVE YOU SOME OF THE FISH HE SCOOPED UP
WHAT ABOUT THE GOLDFISH?
MY FATHER AND THE MISSUS PANICKED...
THIS LED TO YOU DRAMATICALLY FALLING FLAT OFF YOUR BIKE.
I WAS TOTALLY STUBBORN BACK THEN
I SEE.

I STUDIED FISHING TECHNIQUES.
HEY LITTLE GIRL, YOU WENT FISHING, HUH?
WHOA...! HOW'D YOU GET SUCH A BIG CATCH?

WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM?
IKA-CHI-NI..

I HEARD WHAT YOU WERE SAYING JUST NOW
YOU WERE RIDING YOUR BIKE WHILE CARRYING THE GOLDFISH, RIGHT?
AM I WRONG?


THIS IS MY DEDUCTION


WHO TOOK IT?
MY FATHER DID
BUT... DON'T YOU THINK THAT, COMPARED TO THE OTHER PHOTOS THE POINT OF VIEW IS SLIGHTLY LOWER?
JUST LIKE A CHILD'S WOULD BE...

THE GOLDFISH
I WONDER WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM...
BUT IF YOU WERE CARRYING THEM, YOU WOULD'VE DROPPED THEM WHEN YOU FELL OFF THE BIKE
I'M POSITIVE THAT SOMEONE ELSE WAS CARRYING THEM

ALSO LOOK AT THAT PHOTO

SOUMA...!
IN OTHER WORDS THERE WAS ANOTHER KID BESIDES SOUMA-SAN AND NISHI-KI-SAN
THE OTHER PERSON WAS
NISHIKI!
THANK GOD YOU
WHO FLIES OUT EMPTY-HANDED ?
.....

YOU CAN'T RUN AWAY LIKE THAT.
YOU HAVE TO SAY SOMETHING
IF YOU'RE IN THE WRONG, YOU SHOULD APOLOGIZE. IF THERE'S BEEN A MISUNDERSTANDING, YOU SHOULD CLEAR IT UP.
AH...!
S SOUMA..
LET'S HEAD BACK..
NISHIKI?
...IT DOESN'T MATTER.

...THAT'S NOT IT AT ALL.
IS IT BECAUSE GRANDMA ASKED YOU TO?
WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AFTER ME?
I... I WON'T REMEMBER ...WHAT I SHOULD SAY
ANYWAY...
BUT, I ANNOY YOU.
YOU ALWAYS LOOK AT ME WITH AN ANNOYED LOOK ON YOUR FACE...
BECAUSE YOU'RE DISGUSTED AT HOW HOPELESS I AM.
SO DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME... ANYMORE...
WRONG
YOU'RE WRONG I COULD NEVER...

S...
SOU...
I,
"YOU CAN'T RUN AWAY
LIKE THAT."
IT'S NOT BECAUSE SOMEONE TOLD ME TO...
YOU'RE IMPORTANT TO ME

UM, SOUMA...
I... I GOT THE PICTURE, SO...LET GO OF ME...

GOOD
ER I'M TALKING TO THE GOLDFISH.
H-H... YOU'RE ALL RED!

THIS PLACE HASN'T CHANGED
OH... WELCOME
EXCUSE ME, COULD YOU PLEASE SHOW ME THE GOLD-FISH?
WOW, HOW NOSTALGIC
THESE PHOTOS ARE STILL HERE
HAHA, I SORTA REMEMBER THIS ONE
I TOOK THIS PHOTO DIDN'T I?
HM?
COULD YOU BE
YOU
.....

To be continued in volume 3

Kingyozaka Noboru

Chapter 9

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